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KABUL MAY FALL TO TALIBAN IN THREE MONTHS: US INTEL

Taliban fighters could isolate Afghanistan's capital in 30 days and take it over in 90, according to US military intelligence

U.S. TO CONTINUE PULLING OUT ITS TROOPS

On Wednesday, the fundamentalist Islamist militia took Faizabad, capital of the northeastern province of Badakhshan. This was the 8th provincial capital to fall to the insurgent forces in six days. According to reports, the Taliban now control as much as 65% of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the US said it will go ahead with pulling out its troops from the war-torn country

INDIA TO ATTEND PEACE MEET IN DOHA

- Qatar will host a regional conclave in Doha on Thursday, which will discuss ways to contain the massive spike in violence in Afghanistan and push the stalled peace process
- India is likely to attend the event. Turkey and Indonesia will also participate in the regional meet, according to reports | P12

Aug 31

THE U.S. PLANS TO CONCLUDE TROOPS PULLOUT BY THE END OF THIS MONTH

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Take more risks to aid economy, PM tells India Inc

Says govt did difficult reforms in national interest, it's time for industry to reciprocate

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

INDIA's pandemic-battered economy has started growing again and the government has chosen to bite the bullet to push bold reforms to make things easy for businesses, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told India Inc on Wednesday. Now, domestic industry should do its bit by enhancing risk-taking appetite, he said.

"A vehicle can't run on one wheel. All wheels have to run smoothly. Indian industry has to increase its natural tendency of risk taking," Modi said while speaking at the plenary session of the Confederation of Indian Industry.

He said reforms are a matter of conviction for the government. "Today there is a government which is ready to take the biggest risk in the interest of the nation... We have taken bold decisions. Reforms continued even during the pandemic. Recently, we decided to end the retrospective tax by correcting the mistakes of the past. I believe this will further strengthen the trust between government and industry," he added.

Retro tax

The bold decision to correct the mistakes of the past by ending the contentious retrospective tax has led to greater trust between the government and industry, PM Modi said

Praising new-age entrepreneurs, Modi said India's youth want to work hard, take risks and bring results, which is reflected in the vibrant start-up space. "Several unicorns are becoming the image of the nation... 7-8 years ago, India might have had just 3-4 unicorns. Today, there are 60. Out of these, 21 have been developed in the past few months," Modi said.

He added that to help brand India, industry has to complement government's efforts by making its policies and strategies accordingly.

Showing faith in India Inc, Modi said the domestic industry has braved the second wave well and the government is ready to extend all support.

"During such a massive pandemic, we are witnessing the strengthening of Indian government and its industries. From masks to PPEs to vaccination, the industry has given every possible support to the government. All of you have been major players in the Indian growth story," Modi said.

Search operations by ITBP personnel after a landslide on in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday | PTI

10 DIE IN LANDSLIDE; 50 FEARED TRAPPED

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

AT least 10 people were killed and 13 others rescued while 50 more are feared buried under the debris of a landslide in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday, as it trapped a few vehicles that were passing by.

Among the vehicles impacted by the landslide are a Himachal Road Transport Corporation bus, a truck and a few cars. the rescue team at the site is yet to locate the ill-fated bus that is buried under the debris. One vehicle was fully damaged and a car partially damaged.

As for the truck, it was hit by a boulder and rolled down towards the Sutlej River, killing its driver on the spot.

The landslide occurred just before noon at Chaura village of Kinnaur. The driver of the bus was reportedly thrown out of the vehicle due to the impact of the slide. He later said there were 25 passengers in his vehicle that was on its way from Reckong Peo to Haridwar. The bus conductor also managed to survive with injuries.

A rescue team comprising 10 ambulances, four earth removers, 52 ITBP personnel, 30 police and 27 NDRF personnel are on the spot. Himachal Pradesh State Disaster Management Director Sudesh Kumar Mokhta said the rescued persons have

been taken to the Bhawanagar community health centre for treatement. Of the 10 bodies recovered, eight were passengers of a Tata Sumo. There were conflicting figures on the people still trapped, with the numbers ranging from 30 to 60.

On July 25, nine persons were killed and three others injured after boulders fell on a Tempo Traveller carrying 11 passengers near Batseri on the Sangla-Chitkul road.

Christian schools saving ₹2.5K cr by denying seats to poor: Child rights body

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

NEARLY 13,000 schools in India, run by Christian organisations, may be saving over ₹2,500 crore every year by not offering admission to students from the economically weaker section (EWS), as mandated by the Right to Education Act, the country's apex child rights body has estimated.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is using the estimate to build its case for bringing minority institutions under the ambit of the Act, which makes it mandatory for all unaided schools to admit EWS students at the primary level.

A report prepared by the NCPCR and accessed by this newspaper says that as per the Household Social Consumption on Education in India for 2017-18, the average expenditure per student for pursuing general courses in private unaided institutions was ₹18,267.

Considering that the number of children in about 12,904 Christian minority schools spread across India as per its study on minority education is 54,86,884, it means that these schools earn ₹10,022.89 crore from the students.

Since these schools are exempted from providing admission to children from the disadvantaged or weaker sections, they are saving on expenditure equivalent to 25% of total children, which comes to be ₹2,505.72, the report has concluded.

"We feel it is urgently required to amend the laws and open these schools for EWS students as while being projected as minority schools, they are mainly catering to elite class students of non-Christian categories," said NCPCR chairman Priyank Kanoongo.

Cater to just 8% of minority population

Overall, minority schools cater to less than 8% of the minority population. But in TN, Maharashtra and Meghalaya, such schools cater to more than 30% of the minority population

The report said Christian schools have 74.01% of the student population belonging to the non-Christian community and in several states this figure is as high as 80%.

Sulking Anand threatens to quit, CM, BSY step in

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE simmering dissent within BJP over the recent allotment of portfolios came to the fore on Wednesday when Minister for Tourism, Ecology and Environment Anand Singh, who has not kept his dissatisfaction over his ministry a secret, threatened to resign, not just as minister but also as MLA. He later seemed to retract from his position after much convincing by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and former chief minister BS Yediyurappa.

Accompanied by Shorapur MLA Narasimha Nayak, Singh's first port of call was to Yediyurappa. He later held talks with Bommai in a last-ditch attempt to get his prized Forest portfolio.

Sources privy to the meeting between Singh and Yediyurappa said that the former was advised to drop his resignation plans and to work with Bommai. "What will you do resigning as MLA now? There will be bypolls unnecessarily during the pandemic. Elections are less than two years away. You have at least been given a cabinet berth and two key portfolios," Yediyurappa is said to have told Singh.

Not receiving the kind of support he hoped for, Singh then proceeded to meet Bommai, who is also said to have dissuaded him from resigning.

"Singh and I have been friends for over 30 years now. We are in touch and all his concerns will be addressed. I will speak to him again," Bommai told reporters on Wednesday morning.

Singh said, "It's true that I had asked for a change in portfolio but I never said I am going to resign. The question of resigning does not arise at all. I would not have displayed my displeasure if Yediyurappa had continued to be the chief minister." P4

JAB-O-METER: TAKE YOUR SHOT

TOTAL DOSES: 52,32,53,450

	August 10	August 11
	37,76,765 doses	40,02,634 doses

NATIONWIDE	AUG 10	AUG 11
Fresh cases	28,204	38,353
Recoveries	41,511	40,013
Deaths	373	497

KARNATAKA	AUG 10	AUG 11
Fresh cases	1,338	1,826
Recoveries	1,947	1,618
Deaths	31	33

CALM AFTER STORM

After the Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die on Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Congress president Sonia Gandhi and floor leaders of various other parties met Speaker Om Birla in his chamber over tea. The stormy session, however, logged in the third best legislative business record. On Wednesday, the Rajya Sabha too passed the Constitution amendment bill to restore the powers of the states to make their own OBC lists. Earlier, the Lok Sabha had passed it. Meanwhile, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday broke down in the House while conveying his deep anguish over the unruly scenes in the House | P9

No need for permission from other states for Mekedatu, says Bommai

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

DAYS after the Centre informed the Lok Sabha that Karnataka needs consent from all Cauvery riparian states to go ahead with the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir Project, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Wednesday said that no such permission is needed from other states for a drinking water project.

"As per the Supreme Court judgement concerning Andhra Pradesh projects, such permission is not required for drinking water projects. I have already brought it to the notice of Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat after he issued the statement," Bommai said, responding to a question on the Union minister's statement in the Lok Sabha last week.

Shekhawat, replying to a question by Janata Dal MP from Hassan Prajwal Revanna on the Mekedatu project, told the Lok Sabha that the project needed consent from other riparian states. Bommai on Wednesday said that he and other officials have been summoned to Delhi with all relevant documents to support the State's case. "We will go to Delhi and convince the Union minister," he said. The government will continue its legal fight against Tamil Nadu's petition in the Supreme Court and execute the project, he said.

While Tamil Nadu has urged the Centre not to clear the project, Karnataka has contended that it is aimed only at providing drinking water to Bengaluru and no irrigation component is involved in it.

FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

Recruits of the new Special Weapons & Tactics (SWAT) team of the Bengaluru city police at a training drill. The SWAT team will act as the first responder in the event of a terror strike, before the elite Garuda Force is called in | EXPRESS | P5

EXPRESS READ

ULB elections to be held on Sept 3, says poll panel

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Election Commission on Wednesday announced elections for various urban local bodies, including three city municipal corporations, on September 3. The counting will take place on September 6 | P4

Congress appoints new whips in Rajya Sabha

New Delhi: The Congress has appointed MPs Syed Naseer Hussain and Chhaya Verma as its whips in the Rajya Sabha. It now has the same number of whips and chief whips in the Upper House as in the Lower House | P4

Privatisation of PSUs back on track: Official

New Delhi: Disinvestment of PSUs is back on track after some Covid-induced setbacks, and DIPAM aims to conclude a host of transactions by March-end, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Wednesday.

TMC Abhishek Banerjee booked

A case has been booked in Tripura against the TMC national general secretary and others for allegedly obstructing policemen from performing their duties.

INVOKING BLESSINGS

Karnataka ministers, new and old, take up mighty rituals ahead of work

Housing and Infrastructure Development Minister V Somanna performs pooja at his office in Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru on Wednesday | EXPRESS

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

IT is an unmissed ritual in the hallowed precincts of Vidhana Soudha or Vikas Soudha, seats of power in Karnataka, that when new ministers take charge, their rooms are repainted and elaborate pujas, seeking divine blessings, are conducted before these leaders step into their chambers and start their work.

While it is understandable that six first-time ministers – Sunil Kumar, Araga Jnanendra, BC Nagesh, Shankar Patil Munenkoppa, N Munirathna and Halappa Achar – indulged in such rituals, what is surprising is that many ministers who are reoccupying virtually the same ministries and same offices, too are carrying out the pujas with gusto.

While Vidhana Soudha is replete with stories of grand pujas performed by former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, minister HD Revanna and former chief minister BS Yediyurappa, some recall how H Anjaneya, a minister in former chief minister Siddaramaiah cabinet, brought down a wall at Vidhana Soudha, which is a heritage building, to make it Vaastu compliant, triggering an outrage among people.

Former deputy CM Dr G Parameshwara, when in power, too went out of his way and issued special orders to keep the doors of Vidhana Soudha open on a Sunday, only to conduct a special ritual at an auspicious time and date. Most ministers have their own favourite sets of priests, who after appeasing the Gods in official chambers, proceed to perform pujas to newly allotted vehicles too.

KS Eshwarappa, who continues to hold the ministerial post from the previous cabinet, got the rituals performed on Tuesday, while Byrati Basavraj, who too has been reassigned a ministry, organised pujas on Friday. Housing Minister V Somanna thought it fit to perform the ritual as he has shifted his offices from Vikas Soudha to Vidhana Soudha. Justifying the rituals, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Eshwarappa told *TNIE*, "Yes the portfolios are the same and the offices are the same, but remember, the old government was dissolved when former CM Yediyurappa resigned and this is a new government."